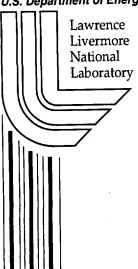
## Deterring Asymmetric Threats from Sub-State Actors

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## Deterring Asymmetric Threats from Sub-State Actors

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Deterrence means preventing another's actions by influencing their decisionmaking process. Nuclear deterrence was successfully accomplished during the Cold War by holding the adversary's valuable assets at risk by targeting them with nuclear weapons, a policy known as mutually assured destruction (MAD). In this case neither player attacks the other, because the ultimate outcome is self-destruction.

Deterrence based upon MAD is largely ineffective against sub-state actors who may have few if any assets, the location of which may be unknown. Furthermore, the threat of destroying their assets may only serve to strengthen their motivation to do more stealthy violence, the threat being interpreted as a taunt.

The key to establishing deterrence is understanding the adversary's decision process, starting with the factors upon which decisions are made, called decision attributes. Asymmetric threats are assumed to involve chemical, biological, radiological, or nuclear (CBRN) weapons. So, the key decision attributes here are concerned with the acquisition and use of CBRN weapons. We have identified the following five countermeasure objectives for establishing deterrence:

- Reduce access to CBRN weapons, expertise, materials, and equipment
- Make CBRN weapons difficult to use
- Reduce the effectiveness of CBRN weapons
- Increase the likelihood of being caught acquiring and using CBRN weapons
- Establish a policy of retribution for acquiring and using CBRN weapons

It should be emphasized that an adversary's perception toward these objectives is most important in affecting their decisionmaking. Of course each adversary will respond differently toward these countermeasures, depending upon their motivations, objectives, preferences, resources, and willingness to gamble.

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Motivation of violence is defined as the fundamental cause or driving force, absent which the intent to do violence no longer exists. Correct understanding of motivations requires adapting your adversary's perspective. This work builds upon an earlier study of bioterrorism target attractiveness that identified fundamental motivations and objectives of terrorism.<sup>1</sup>

## Reference

1. Robert V. Homsy, "Bioterrorism Threat Assessment and Target Attractiveness," Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, Livermore, CA, UCRL-JC-144404-EXT-abs, June 30, 2001; see also, CBNP Summer Meeting 2001, Chemical and Biological National Security Program, DOE/NNSA, Washington, DC., July 24-26, 2001 meeting abstracts, pp. 19-20.